VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

MAY 1991 ONE DOLLAR

Editor's Page

I read in the paper recently that many zoos across the country have stopped naming their animals. It seems that the people in charge have decided that naming their animals gives visitors the wrong impression. Naming a cockatoo "King Tut" or a rhinoceros "Rapunzel," they say, encourages a tendency to perceive wild animals as pets. As zoos see it, their mission is to instill in the public a sense of respect and caring about an entire species rather than particular individuals. As Steve Graham, director of the Detroit Zoo was quoted saying, "I've never known an individual animal that was as beautiful as an entire species."

So, zoos have decided to wean the public off individual names. Cutesy nicknames like Boobkins or Flopsy may soon be replaced with identification tags of Baboon #355 and Camel #530.

Obviously, the move to treat wild animals with respect rather than as objects of entertainment or extensions of ourselves is admirable and has been needed for a long time. When I worked at the San Diego Zoo 15 years ago, it used to be a favorite pastime of the childrens' zoo employees to dress up baby animals and push them around the grounds in strollers. I remember one baby orangutan who was snatched from its mother immediately after it was born and shortly thereafter squeezed into a chiffon blue dress and plopped into a stroller for an afternoon walk. The tiny animal even suffered the wearing of a lacy cotton hat that matched her outfit.

Nevertheless, the zoo probably got alot of mileage out of that baby orangutan. People look for the familiar in other species, for a link to themselves, and seeing that big-eyed baby wearing diapers and ruffled panties was comforting and delighted the crowds.

The visitors also loved the bears who would wave or do somersaults for biscuits the tour guides would toss them. And tourists would wait, shoulder to shoulder, for a particular gorilla to finally get fed up with the hundreds of pairs of eyes gawking at him and scoop up some excrement off the ground and heave it into the crowd. People would duck and scream and then burst out laughing. The gorilla would beat his chest and roar.

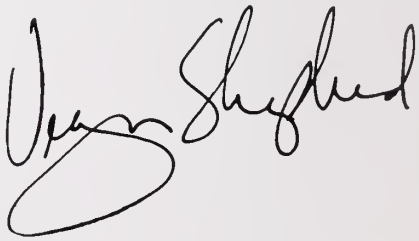
It was all kind of sad that an animal couldn't be an animal in its own right, but had to be some kind of pet to be laughed at or drooled over to please us. That's probably the kind of thing that zoos are trying to change.

But, in any attempt to educate the public, to instill respect for wildlife, I think you have to be careful you don't strip away too much feeling and take away too much of the familiarity and the closeness people need to feel toward other species. We need that personal connection. It's too much for our small brains and big hearts to be asked to care about abstract things, like "populations" or "species." We care about things that respond to kind looks and eat from our hands. No wonder most politicians invoke "our children" whenever they want to make us do something brave and socially good. There's a personal connection. And it works.

But, that doesn't mean we have to teach wild animals human tricks or dress them up in our clothes for the personal touch. Still, we must allow ourselves the opportunity to establish a connection, somehow. We need to establish a familiarity with wildlife.

Being around them helps. I think that's one of the great benefits of creating a bit of habitat for wildlife in backyards, for example. Yes, it helps wildlife, but it also helps us. Seeing the purple martins return in the spring to the houses you put up for them, or recognizing the pileated woodpecker who wakes you up every morning gets you past the formal introductions and (pardon my insolence) onto a first-name basis.

I can't help it. I don't mind naming things I care about. I name my dogs and I would name a cardinal in the backyard if I had the privilege of knowing him well enough. Because then, of course, we wouldn't be simply *Cardinalis cardinalis* and *Homo sapiens* acknowledging one another; we'd be friends.



Volume 52 Number 5

Double-crested comorants are one of the many bird species you can see up close—if you're in a canoe. Story on p. 24; photo by Rob Simpson.

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

Back cover: Large yellow lady's slippers; photo by Hal Horwitz. Virginia's native orchids aren't found in hothouses—you have to go into the woods to find them. Story on p. 4.

Cover: Virginia whitetail buck; photo by Bill Lea.

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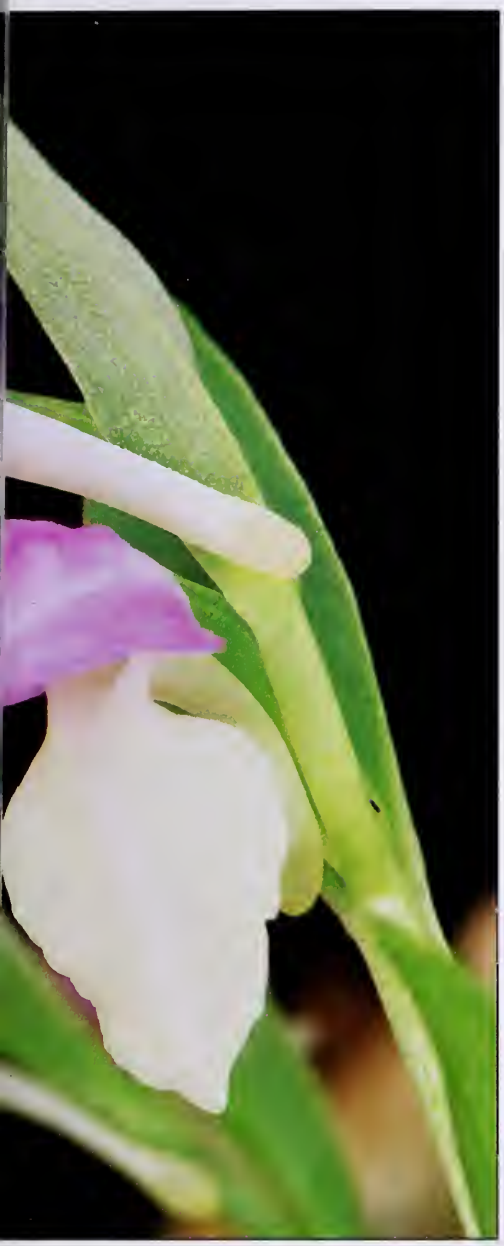
Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Related Natural Resources

An Elegant Passion

A love for native orchids can quickly turn into a passion that keeps you in the woods, especially if you're a photographer.

by Nancy Hugo
photos by Hal Horwitz



Showy orchis

Showy orchis
Galearis spectabilis

Blooming from April-June, fragrant 1″ flowers rise on short (5-12″) stalks between two broad glossy green leaves. It's one of our earliest flowering orchids and grows either singly or in small clusters in rich woods.

Hal Horwitz's photos will acquaint you with some of Virginia's native orchids. The photos depict some of Virginia's rarest orchids, some of her most abundant orchids, and some of the ones that have made the most unusual adaptations to their environment. Enjoy the pictures, then see if you can't find some of these orchids in the wild.

When most of us think of orchids, we think of tropical or hothouse flowers like the ones our mothers and grandmothers wear to church on Easter Sundays, but if Richmond photographer Hal Horwitz has his way, Virginians may soon be as familiar with orchids in native habitats as they are with orchids on our grandmothers' shoulders.

At 6′3″, the hulking Horwitz seems an unlikely candidate to be capturing the beauty of these delicate plants. Merely getting down to the level of some of his ½″ subjects must be something of an accomplishment, but the 50-year-old Horwitz has had experience operating in small places. He's a pediatric dentist who often works a full week at the office before heading into the field to photograph orchids.

Why orchids?

"Orchids gave me a focus," says Horwitz. It was 30 years ago in dental school that Horwitz took up photography as a hobby, but it wasn't until six years ago that this married father of three grown children started photographing plants. After a year of photographing plants at Richmond's Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, he went to the annual wildflower symposium at Wintergreen where he was impressed with the speakers, but unimpressed with their slides. "It's a shame," he told the program organizer, "that your speakers are so incredible and their slides are so terrible." Responding to this bit of brash but agreeable directness, the program organizer issued Horwitz a challenge: take your own slides of native plants and bring a sample of your work to the symposium next year.

Hal Horwitz

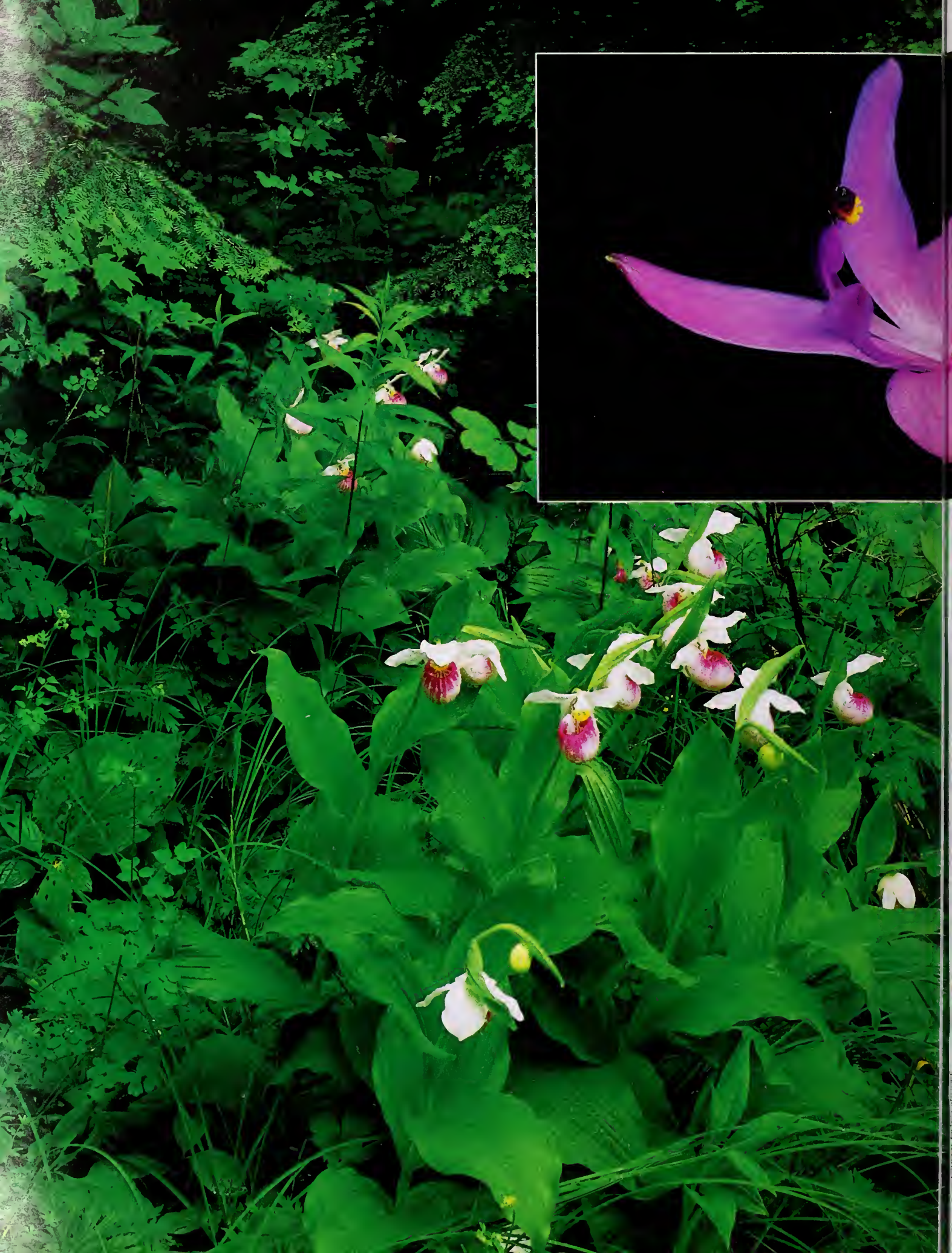
To make a long story short, Horwitz accepted the challenge, took hundreds of pictures of wildflowers, and is now a photography instructor at the Wintergreen wildflower symposium where he has presented slide shows for the past four years.

It was during his second or third year of photographing wildflowers that he got hooked on orchids.

"I started photographing them because I thought they were pretty," he says. "Then I wanted to find out how they worked. I started asking 'What function do they perform?' and 'How do they fit into the intricate web of life?' I got interested in the way they'd adapted to different habitats and how they'd evolved. You know, orchids are unique in the plant world because of their structures—the ways they've adapted to their various pollinators, and they're one of the most ancient plant families."

Pretty soon, Horwitz found himself immersed in books like Charles Darwin's *Various Contrivances by which Orchids are Fertilized by Insects*, and he was learning the one thing he swore he'd never learn: Latin.

"Just say it to me in plain English," Horwitz used to complain to anyone who insisted on referring to orchids



Grass pink

Three-birds orchid

by their botanical names. Now Horwitz knows orchids by their Latin names, too. "The more you want to know," he says, "the more you need to talk to people who speak the language. I just got deeper and deeper into it."

"It was a bite-size chunk, too," says Horwitz of his decision to limit his focus to orchids. "There are thousands of plants that grow in Virginia, but there are only 50 orchids. Photographing all of them promised to be a do-able goal."

Queen lady's slipper
Cypripedium reginae

Blooming in June, this gorgeous orchid, also called the Showy lady's slipper, can be found at only three mountain sites in Virginia. It is more abundant in northern states, particularly around the Great Lakes. It grows in moist woods and swampy areas and likes limestone soils. Never pick this or any other orchid if you find it in the wild.

Grass pink
Calopogon tuberosus

This delicate orchid with grass-like leaves is found in bogs and wet meadows as well as on sandy sites. Its genus name Calopogon *means "beautiful beard" and refers to the yellow beard on the flower's uppermost petal. Grass pinks bloom around the first of July.*

Three-birds orchid or Nodding pogonia
Triphora trianthophora

These delicate bird-like flowers grow in colonies where they exhibit an unusual trait; all the mature buds open at the same time. Scientists aren't sure what triggers this phenomenon but some scientists speculate that by all opening at once the small (3/4") flowers may increase their chances of attracting pollinators. Three-birds orchids bloom in the fall. Look for them in rich woods, along swamp margins, or in floodplains.

Of the 50 species of orchids reported to grow in Virginia, Horwitz has photographed all but two or three. He has also photographed orchids in West Virginia, North Carolina, New York, and Florida in his attempt to photograph all of the 200 orchids native to the United States. Some of the orchids he has searched for he may never find. "Some of those that are listed, especially in Florida, may be extinct," he explains. "They're still listed in books, but the last time anyone saw one may have been decades ago." Of the orchids he's been unable to locate in Virginia, one is a Midwestern native that happens to be listed in the *Atlas of Virginia Flora* because it was twice found in an Augusta meadow. Horwitz doesn't think it grows here anymore.

Protecting orchids and the habitat in which they grow has become one of Horwitz's abiding interests. "Some orchids grow in very specific habitats," he says, "and some of these habitats are very fragile. It bothers you when those habitats are wiped out."

Creating interest in native orchids and making the public aware of the need to protect them is one of the primary goals of Horwitz's work. Not only has he created a pictorial record of Virginia's orchids, he has brought an artist's eye to the task. His photographs (which often include birds, insects, spiders, and native plants other than orchids) have appeared in wildlife art shows across the state. They have also appeared in catalogs, in field guides, in *Time-Life* books, and in *Virginia Wildlife*, *Audubon*, and *Harrowsmith Country Life* magazines.

Slide shows, however, may best showcase Hal Horwitz's talent because these multi-media affairs are the most "Horwitzian" of his work. Luckless is the member of the audience hoping to nap through "In Praise of Native Orchids." Humor, color, music and even a taped-over commentary accompany these slides that are as remarkable for their diversity as they are for their beauty. "I'm no expert," says Horwitz as prelude to his show, but audiences know better. Horwitz may defer to botanists for plant identifications and to academicians for information, but when it comes to communicating the passion he feels for orchids and the beauty he finds in these plants, this amateur is an expert.

Hal Horwitz will be teaching and presenting a slide show of his work at the Wintergreen Spring Wildflower Symposium on May 17-19. Contact Wintergreen at 804/325-2200 for reservations and details. □

Nancy Hugo is a freelance outdoor writer who lives in Ashland.

Nodding ladies' tresses

Nodding ladies' tresses

Spiranthes cernua

In the fall, look for these spiraling rows of small cream-white flowers on 6-24" spikes. They grown in fields, damp meadows, and moist areas.

Yellow fringed orchid

Platanthera ciliaris

Swallowtail butterflies pollinate this showy orchid that blooms July-September in meadows and open woods. An adaptable plant, it grows from the mountains to the coast of Virginia.

Yellow fringed orchid

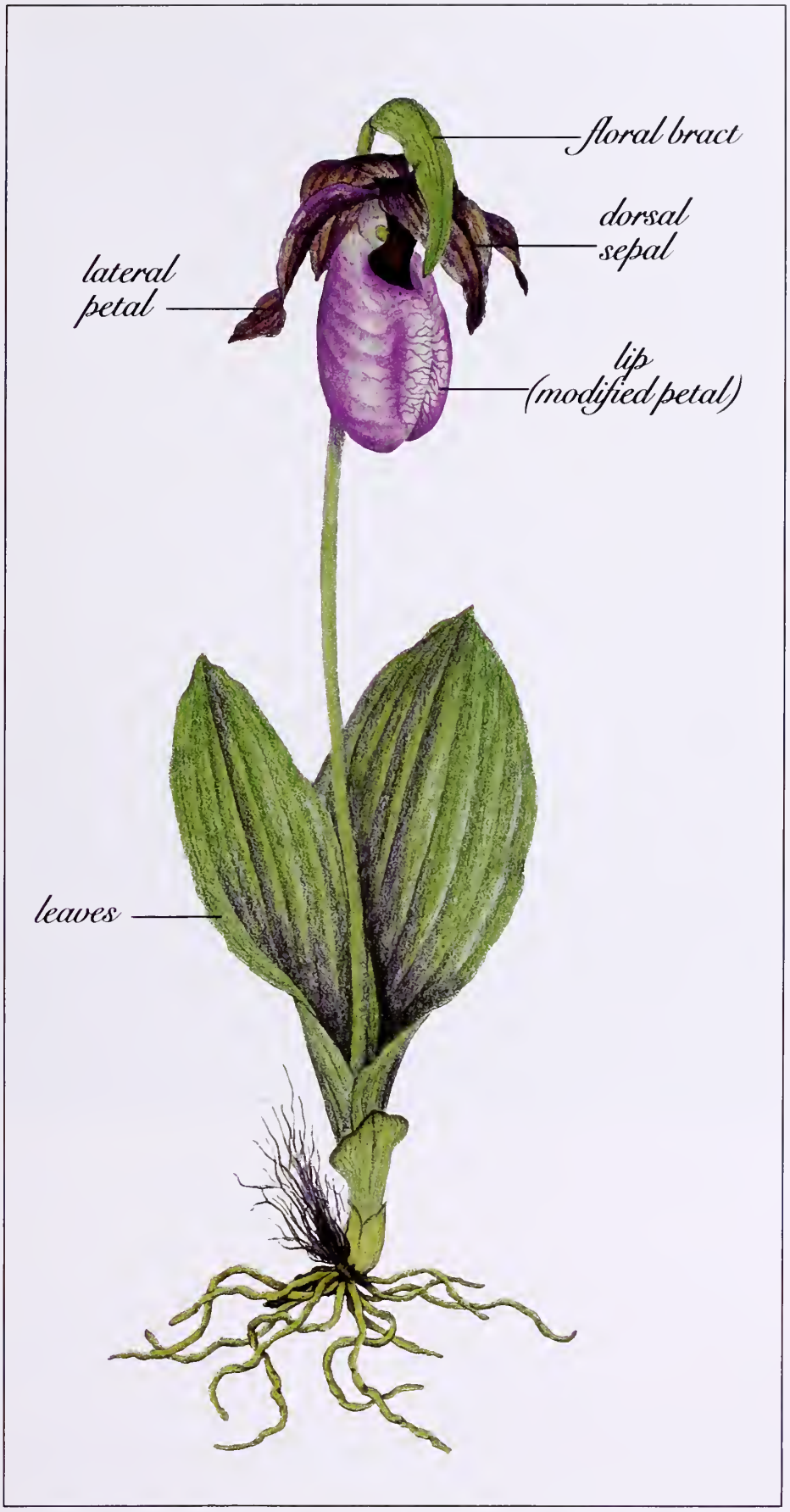
Finding and Identifying Orchids

What makes an orchid an orchid? And where do orchids grow wild in Virginia?

Let's take the second, easier, question first. Some of Virginia's 50 species of orchids are rare and one is so elusive you'd be unlikely to find it even if you knew where to look. The threatened small whorled pogonia, for example, grows in only six known locations in Virginia, and, according to some botanists, it can fail to flower for periods of two to 20 years. Leave the search for the small whorled pogonia to the experts. Other species of orchids may be as near as your backyard, however, and even a small patch of woodland may hold several species.

Some of our most widespread and abundant orchids include the pink lady's slipper, ladies' tresses, rattlesnake plantain, and showy orchis. Pink lady's slippers are denizens of acid woods. Ladies' tresses grow in fields and damp meadows, but now and then one of these slender spikes of spiraling white flowers will pop up in a backyard. Rattlesnake plantain is a familar woodland plant, but most woodsmen know it for its ground-hugging rosettes of white-veined leaves rather than for its tiny white flowers. The long-spurred white and lavender flowers of the showy orchis bloom in rich damp woods and along swamp margins.

According to orchid photographer Hal Horwitz, one of the best places to look for a wide variety of orchids is the Clinch Mountain Wildlife Management Area in southwestern Virginia. Northern Virginia's G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area (which will be featured in the July issue of *Virginia Wildlife*) is also a haven for native orchids. Colonies of yellow lady's slippers and showy orchis bloom on its slopes in the spring.



Pink lady's slipper; illustration by Sharon Morris Kincheloe.

***Crested coral root** (Hexalectris spicata)*
These orchids lack chlorophyll and get their nourishment from fungi that grow in the soil with the plants' branched underground stems. Look for them in June and July.

As you search for native orchids, you'll need a good field guide because not only do native orchids grow in a wide variety of habitats, but to the untrained eye, not all of them look like orchids. Sometimes their flowers grow singly—like lady's slippers. Sometimes they grow in branched clusters like the yellow fringed orchid, and sometimes they bloom along slender stalks like ladies' tresses. Each orchid flower, whether it grows singly or in another arrangement, however, has an unmistakable structure which, to a botanist, identifies it as an orchid.

Instead of having multiple pistils and stamens, an orchid's reproductive parts are fused into a waxy structure called a column; that's the orchid's main identifying feature. Each orchid flower also has three petals and three sepals. That sounds simple enough, but not only do the sepals of an orchid often look like petals, but the lowest of the flower's true petals is often modified into an elaborate lip (the conspicuous pouch of the lady's slipper is an example of this lip). Orchids are also unusual in that their pollen, instead of being powdery, is often held in masses called pollen sacs.

Elaborate variations in their forms make orchids among the most visually interesting flowers in the plant kingdom, but remember that all the flounces and frills that make orchids so attractive to us are really elaborately designed "bait and hook" mechanisms to ensure visits from specific pollinators. The grass pink, for example, has no nectar to offer visiting insects itself, but its pink color and yellow bearded lip tricks insects into thinking it's just another one of the pink flowers with yellow stamens that bloom at the same time and in the same places. Another orchid has a lip that resembles the posterior portion of a female wasp; any male who attempts to copulate can't help but pollinate the flower. The orchid's bag of tricks also includes tunnels, trap doors, and even, in some species, a sticky glue that attaches pollen to the bodies of visiting insects. These are just a few examples of orchid adaptations that have led botanists to call this marvelous plant "one of the culminating products of evolution in the plant world."

How orchids germinate is also a marvel, because the plant's thousands (sometimes millions) of dust-like seeds don't have any food reserves to carry them through germination. To make up for this food deficit, the seeds of most North American orchids enter into a symbiotic (mutually beneficial) relationship with soil fungi, in which the fungi provide sugar for the germinating seed, and this relationship continues throughout the plant's life cycle. The necessity of these soil fungi to the plant's growth is one reason orchids like lady's slippers are nearly impossible to transplant and should never be disturbed in the wild.—N.H.

photo by Garry Walter

Belly Boats— For belly laughs

(and good fishing)

by Steve Ausband

Belly boats don't seem to frighten fish like conventional boats do, and with their easy maneuverability they allow the angler to sneak into casting positions easily; photo by Mike McCray.

Some guys like to deer hunt 20 steps from the back of a pickup truck parked at the edge of a bean field. Some guys like to fish from the bank. That's not for me. I want to get way out into the woods, or up the farthest tributary, or along the patch of grass on the *other* side of the water. I enjoy being out in the middle of things, getting intimate with whatever I'm after. I wear out a lot of boot leather on hunting trips that way, and I burn a lot of gas in my boat. Sometimes (especially on fishing trips), I get so interested in getting in the middle of things that I do more exploring than fishing, but that's just part of the fun. Recently, I found a new way to get close to what I'm doing; in fact, I get right into the water with the fish. I discovered belly boating. Belly boats provide a new experience in closeness for the fisherman. They also look absolutely ridiculous.

The first time I ever saw a float tube fishing rig—also known as a "belly boat"—advertised in a magazine, I thought it was funny looking. The first time I saw a fishing buddy model one (which he did in the security of his office) I laughed so hard I hurt myself. He got even with me, though; he gave me one of my own. Once I *had* one, I decided that maybe the thing didn't look so bad after all.

Being a good sport and having a secure ego, I was not at all hesitant to show my family what a spiffy-looking thing I had added to my collection of fishing gear. I put on the whole works—waders, suspenders, and fully-inflated float tube—and modeled it in the living room. Now, my family is generally charitable about sparing the feelings of others, but this temptation was too much. Amid a great deal of calamitous guffawing and thigh-slapping and what I thought was a fairly indecorous rolling on the floor and fist-pounding by my own flesh and blood, I could hear various attempts at description.

"You look like an elephant with saddlebags."

"You look like a hippopotamus in a tutu."

"You look like a lifesaver for a shark."

Somewhat taken aback by the shortsightedness of a group of otherwise intelligent sportspeople whose excessive mirth blinded them to the beauty of utility, I left the living room and went outside. (Actually, it wasn't as simple as that. I first had to take the thing off, then go outside, then put it on again. People wearing belly boats do not walk through doors, unless the doors are to a double garage.) I put the rig back on and practiced walking on the driveway. My own dogs looked suspiciously at me, growled a little, then crept under the porch.

"Go ahead," I thought. "Slink away. I'm not fishing for dogs."

After that inauspicious beginning I put the thing in the basement and forget about it for three months. I got it out again when a friend who was doing some research in non-tidal wetlands suggested we take float tubes with us to some flooded timber and beaver ponds. I was working on an article with photographs on the wetlands research project, and since I did not relish the idea of going over my head in a swamp while holding a couple of expensive cameras, I thought it was a good idea. It was, but not just for research.

We poked around in duckweed-filled lowlands, and crawled around log-choked swamps for the better part of an afternoon, and we even found a couple of occasions on which we could use the belly boats. The waders got a little hot, since we were working pretty strenuously and the temperature was in the low 90's, but we didn't have to exert ourselves as much as we would have ordinarily, and we could sit down in the boats when we were working in deeper water, near beaver lodges, and relax a little. When we finished looking over the lowlands in question I suggested we take the tubes to a large pond I knew in the vicinity and see how they did as fishing boats.

Ed tried it first. I got to laugh at him as he fastened the suspenders holding up the tube and then waddled down to the water. He really did look like a hippo in a tutu. But I quit laughing when he caught a bass on his second cast. It was small, and he released it after holding it up a little smugly for my admiration.

"Beginner's luck," I said. "Try it again."

He did. He caught two more bass before I could get into the water.

It was a different kind of fishing. We could work our way silently and effortlessly along a shoreline, fishing every bit of productive-looking cover. Our profiles were low—much lower than they would have been if we had been sitting in a boat—and perhaps that kept us from spooking fish in the shallows. I caught several fish right up next to the tube, in the final two or three feet of retrieve. Apparently they were not at all frightened of the tube with the pair of legs stuck out from under it. I probably looked like a large tree—certainly more like a tree than like a man in a boat.

I caught eight more bass in less than an hour. Ed had by this time climbed out on the bank and started taking pictures. Neither of us laughed at how the tubes looked any more. Three of my bass were small, but the other five were pretty nice, and one of them was well over three pounds. Ed had caught two larger than that and a few smaller ones in the same time. There is probably a more effective way to catch bass than that, but it involves draining all the water out of the pond. We let the bass go, except for a few we saved for supper, and vowed to try float-tubing again.

Float tubes are really simple, one-person boats. I remember once many years ago using a tractor-tire innertube to fish a steep, rocky cliff in a reservoir. The innertube had been a swimmer's toy, and a good one; I hit on the idea of swimming it over to the cliff and using it for a fishing boat. I lay down across it much as a person would lie down on a couch, and I fished from a reclining position. It worked pretty well, though small bream kept nibbling on my backside (which hung down into the water), and the reclining position did not make for easy and accurate casting. Also, the tube itself was pretty cumbersome.

The modern devices are much more efficient. They feature an inflatable ring (you can use an inexpensive foot pump, or, if hyperventilation sounds like fun, you can even blow some of the smaller varieties up by mouth), and a piece of canvas webbing and some straps to keep the tube around the fisherman's middle and to keep him from falling through. Most float tubers wear waders, though in warm water they are not necessary. Swim fins are a great help in maneuverability, leaving both hands free for fishing. Most tubes have two or more pockets built into the tops to hold items such as small plastic boxes with extra lures, and they all have rings for attaching a stringer. In other words, they are like little boats, except that part of the boat's occupant is under water, acting both as ballast and as a means of propulsion.

On subsequent trips with the new tube I made several observations. The first was that float tubes are first-class fly-rodding platforms. I tied on a small Gaines "Sneaky Pete" bug and worked my way around the edges of a pond. Catching big bluegills on a fly rod is as good way to spend a late summer afternoon as I have ever found. I would lay the bug right up next to a line of aquatic vegetation, or in a hole in the weeds, and let it sit until the ripples had died. Then I would twitch it lightly once or twice. I seldom had to wait long. The first day I tried it, I caught several very nice bream, including one or two thick, hump-shouldered specimens that weighed around a pound each. I also hooked a half-dozen bass, releasing all but the two I invited home to supper. The largest bass that day was a two-pounder, but a two-pound bass on a fly rod is a gala celebration, and even the ones that were just half that size put on a good show.

Being just a little above the water made a careful approach easy, especially with the light popping bug. The water would barely ripple as the bug landed. A couple of times the fish hit the bug almost as soon as it touched the surface, and on several occasions I watched as a bream or a bass came part-way out of the water to smash the offering. The bass always got airborne after a short run, and the bream would turn broadside to me and start that steady, sawing, back-and-forth fight that is their trademark. The belly boat probably increased the number of strikes I got, since I was able to maneuver to exactly the best point from which to make a cast. It definitely increased the amount of fun I was having, since it put me (as the saying goes) "right in amongst 'em."

Another thing I noticed was that fish seemed completely unafraid of the tube, as long as my feet weren't moving. Again, as they had on the first occasion, fish often hit right beside the tube. Once in a while I could see fish ahead of me, hanging suspended just outside a grass line, oblivious to the presence of the tube. The fish I put on a stringer trailed behind the tube when I moved, but if I remained in one spot very long without moving, they would bump into my legs or wind the stringer around my ankles.

I think I scared more fish with sloppy casts than I did with the tube. I found that I could do quite well with short, accurate casts, so I went

to very light lures on my spinning rod, small spinnerbaits or little rubber minnows with weighted jig heads. Ultralight tackle made things much easier, since casting a tiny jig with line heavier than about six-pound test is an invitation to the backlash monster.

Learning to maneuver the thing in the water involved the need for patience and inventiveness. If the water is fairly shallow—say, about chest deep, with a few holes—the fisherman can simply wade along, touching the bottom with his toes now and then, and put himself in one prime location after another. If the water is much deeper, however, attempts at forward motion get more complicated. It is actually much easier to go backwards. An easy, relaxed kicking motion now and then moves the float tube backwards, and the fisherman casts to the bank at his side or slightly behind him. What makes this something besides an exercise in futility is the low profile of the tube; it simply is less likely to frighten fish hugging a bit of shoreline cover.

With a belly boat, no body of water is inaccessible to the angler anymore; photo by Keith Sutton.

Several manufacturers make swim fins designed for use by belly boaters, claiming that they work much more efficiently at propelling the float tuber backwards than ordinary fins do. I haven't tried the special fins; regular fins work just fine, and in quiet, sheltered waters—especially those with lots of shallow spots and occasional deep holes—I can even get by without fins at all. It's slow, but I'm not a hurried fisherman.

More and more manufacturers now are recommending the use of personal flotation devices (life vests) with float tubes. Some tubes have more than one air compartment, and it is possible that if the main compartment failed the secondary ones might provide enough bouyancy to keep a person afloat. Still, the PFD would provide an extra margin of safety. In areas where I have used the tubes, puncturing one would be unlikely; I can imagine situations, though (such as in a swift, rocky stream), where abrasion and sharp objects could present serious problems.

I haven't tried duck hunting with the tube yet, but I think I will. While I was busy with my fly rod, working a popping bug along the edge of a line of vegetation, two wood ducks came overhead, wings cupped, and tried to land. I looked up, we saw each other, and the ducks flared. Then they circled once and landed a short distance away. I must not have looked very threatening. Maybe they thought I was a particularly ugly stump. The experience made me think that the tube might have a place in a large beaver pond near by my house, come early duck season.

Belly boats come in a variety of models these days—one for almost every budget. The last catalogue I consulted listed five models ranging in price from around $40 to well over $100. The more expensive ones have more pockets for goodies, are often made of tougher material, and usually have higher, more comfortable backs (also inflatable) than the cheaper tubes. Workable fins for float-tubers start at around 25 bucks and go up—sometimes way up. Fins to fit stocking-foot waders are generally much easier to find (and somewhat less expensive) than those designed to go over boot-foot waders. Even the most expensive complete outfit, though, will cost less than the annual insurance premium on my boat. The boat has undeniable advantages in big water, of course, but the little tubes certainly have a place, too. In certain situations, in quiet waters, in ponds, or up the headwaters of larger reservoirs, they are ideal for getting me in the middle of things—even if they make me look funny. □

photo by Spike Knuth

Steve Ausband is the chairman of the English Department of Averett College in Danville, and is a frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife.

A Southern Gentleman Remembered

by Jack Randolph

Richard Hunter Cross, Jr.—Dick Cross to his many friends—passed away last November, and with his passing Virginia lost one of its true pioneers in wildlife management. Dick was a member of a team of biologists who undertook and succeeded in accomplishing the task of bringing deer, bear and turkeys back to Virginia. That team included such respected names as Joe Coggin, Jim Engle, Charlie Gilchrist, Jack Gwynn, Hal Meyers, Charlie Peery, Chester Phelps, Johnny Redd, Kit Shaffer, Ned Thorton and Hassell Taylor, all of whom worked with Dick and all of whom, each in his own way, made contributions toward bringing back the abundance of wildlife we enjoy today.

When Dick stepped down as Director of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries in 1987, after 45 years of service, he requested that his leaving be accompanied with as little fanfare as possible. That was Dick Cross.

Perhaps former director Jim McInteer said it best when he wrote: "While Dick was deadly serious about his profession, his family and bird dogs, I do not think he was all that serious about much else, including himself. His wit, sense of humor and apparent joy as he went through life were his outstanding characteristics."

There is quite a difference between sitting behind a desk in Richmond and working in the field. Dick sometimes spoke fondly of those days

Dick Cross dedicated 45 years to the Department, and was the well-loved director of the agency from 1981 to 1987.

when he was out in the mountains of southwest Virginia.

Kit Shaffer, former assistant to Dick in the Game Division says, "My most vivid memories of Dick Cross go back almost four and a half decades—back to the Dark Ages of game management in Virginia. At that time Dick and (his wife) Josie were living in an apartment in Roanoke. Dick was the wildlife biologist covering all of southwestern Virginia, but concentrating primarily on the Jefferson National Forest. Those were the days when biologists with masters degrees were paid $200 a month and game managers were asked to survive on $50.

"Following World War II, except for grouse and squirrels, the great southwest was practically devoid of wildlife, especially quail, turkeys and deer. Dick initiated and carried out a number of programs aimed at restoring game populations and wildlife habitat. He obtained deer from Pennsylvania, Michigan and other states and experimented with live trapping and transplanting techniques to obtain whitetails from other regions of the Old Dominion where deer were more numerous.

"Dick spent discouraging years stocking pen-reared turkeys from the Cumberland Game Farm. Unfortunately, most of these efforts failed. Later, live-trapped wild turkeys from the Gathright Wildlife Management Area in Bath County were stocked over the entire region with outstanding success."

Few people could get along with people as well as Dick Cross. In the early days he built a team of wildlife managers that contributed greatly to the return of our mountain wildlife. Kit Shaffer continues:

"Undoubtedly one of the keys to Dick's game management programs was his dedicated wildlife managers. At the start, he hired, trained and assigned these mountain men to strategic areas. These individuals, most of whom have gone to greener pastures, created wildlife habitat with axes and grubbing hoes. They babysat 24 hours a day with the infant deer and wild turkey populations. The contributions of the Medley brothers, Joe Rose, Sam Williamson and the remainder of Cross's crew were truly outstanding!"

In a word, Dick could be characterized as "quiet," yet no one could overlook his sense of humor. As Jim McInteer says, "There were few things or events in which Dick could not detect a thread of humor. He loved good stories and good jokes, of which he had an abundant store and enjoyed spreading around."

McInteer goes on to say, "Dick was a great practical joker, too. He had a lot of fun. Who else would think of buying a small, dark green (no stripes) watermelon and hiding it halfway among cucumber vines in a backyard garden, just to see the reaction of the gardener who thought she had just produced a blue ribbon, world-record cucumber?!"

There is another story that concerns Dick at a hunting camp. In the night someone switched the false teeth from one cup to another, leading to an interesting breakfast exercise among the older and toothless hunters.

As with most dedicated members of the Game Department staff, Dick was an avid hunter and fisherman. Kit Shaffer remembers: "He dearly loved to hunt for grouse and quail. Without a doubt his two beautiful English setters were among the best bird dogs in Virginia. They would hunt skillfully up those steep mountain slopes searching for those elusive grouse and just as enthusiastically for those coveys of quail near his home in Concord.

"Dick was also an expert and dedicated trout fisherman. He was a purist, always using flies and spinners on native trout. I recall one memorable day on upper McFalls Creek in Botetourt County. Dick caught his limit of natives almost before I could bait my hook with a worm. He spent most of that day trying to educate me, but with little success. Finally, toward sundown he pointed out a place for me to cast my lure. I cast and the pool erupted as a huge brookie blasted the bait. My line tangled in a submerged bush, but Dick waded in and untangled it, and landed my prize. Later, he sat on the bank admiring my trophy. There were tears in his eyes as he whispered over and over, 'the King is dead.' "

Dick's talents were recognized by his superiors in the Game Department and as he rose through the ranks he had less and less time to enjoy the bountiful wildlife he helped nourish. Bird dog field trials and bream fishing on a New Kent County pond replaced the grouse coverts and the trout streams.

Some will remember Dick in many roles—as a biologist, as an administrator, but mostly as a friend. Kit Shaffer says, "Whenever we daydream and reminisce about nostalgic memories, we like to visualize Dick Cross eagerly following his setters up some lovely grouse-infested ridge or casting a fly into a clear pool below the falls of some remote mountain stream in his beloved southwest."

Dick was a fighter pilot during World War II with numerous combat missions to his credit. Some years ago, as I departed for a trip to Berchtesgaden, Germany, Dick asked me to take a look at the railroad station there to see if there were any bullet holes in it. On a tip that Hitler was going to be there, he had made a strafing run on the station during the war.

Actually, I remembered the bullet holes from when I was stationed in Germany over 20 years earlier, but when I visited Berchtesgaden the second time, the bullet holes were gone.

Dick may not have left his mark in Germany, but he certainly left one here—he was truly a Virginian—and there is no higher calling. □

Jack Randolph is an assistant director with the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

The Richard Hunter Cross, Jr. Wildlife Management Scholarship has been established at VPI and SU. Contributions can be made to the fund by sending checks made payable to: Virginia Tech Foundation—Cross Scholarship Fund, Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0321.

GALLERY

"When I paint for pleasure," says artist Carolyn German Hall, "I always paint wildlife." The Rockbridge County native has been painting professionally for 10 years, primarily keeping up with the demand for commissioned portraits of people and pets.

But, that is all changing. Although the painting featured on page 18, "Safety Lies in Stillness" will remain in her private collection, she has recently completed a work of red-tailed hawks for the Wildlife Center of Virginia which will be auctioned off in the fall. In addition, she just sold a painting of two red foxes, entitled "Watching."

Working entirely in pastels, Ms. Hall likes best to use live subjects as models for her work. The inspiration for the owl featured in "Safety Lies in Stillness" came from a recuperating and cooperative owl she met in a pet shop. The models for the red-tailed hawks work came from two rehabilitating hawks at the Wildlife Center.

Even with willing models, however, completing a work is no rush job. It took Ms. Hall about a month to complete "Safety Lies in Stillness," for she explains that most of the time she puts into a painting is taken up by research. "I spend a lot of time reading about the animal, researching its habitat and behavior," she says. And she will use photos gleaned from such research to help her with details. Plus, she spends as much time in the woods as she can. "If I see an animal in the wild," she says, "I will store up information in my head and remember something distinct about it to use in a painting later on."

Born and raised in the Shenandoah Valley on a farm, Ms. Hall had very little formal training in art and calls her talent a "God-given" one. Last year, she completed 14 works alone, and over the years, she has sold her paintings to people in Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Hawaii and Virginia.

Her latest idea is to work on a series of small prints that people could hang as a grouping. "But," she laughs, "I may walk outside today and see an owl that I love and that would all change."

Carolyn German Hall has available a limited edition of signed and numbered 23½" X 17¼" prints of "Safety Lies in Stillness." She also has prints available of her study of two foxes, entitled "Watching." Contact Ms. Hall at P.O. Box 2144, Raphine, VA 24472 (703) 377-6237 for more information. □

Virginia Wildlife *is seeking wildlife artists to feature in our VW Gallery. We are looking for high-quality wildlife and scenic art featuring species indigenous to Virginia to profile in the magazine. Submit horizontal format transparencies (preferably larger than 35mm) for review to Emily Pels, Art Director,* Virginia Wildlife, *P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. Telephone: 804/367-1000.*

© Carolyn
1989
Safety Li
by Carolyn

n Stillness
erman Hall

photo by Brad Herndon

Turkey Troubles

(Things I hate about spring gobbler hunting)

by
C.H. "Kit"Shaffer

illustrations by
Emily Pels

After over three decades of spring gobbler hunting, I will readily admit that I am hopelessly addicted to the sport. To me it is the most rewarding of any outdoor activity which we sportsmen are privileged to enjoy. It is carried out during several of the most magnificent months in the calendar. In the past I have enthusiastically written, lectured and expounded at every opportunity on the virtues associated with this sport. However, to be perfectly honest, there are numerous irritations which often distract from this fabulous experience. We gobbler chasers are all aware of these negative factors, but we attempt to ignore them and emphasize only the positive aspects. How many of these 19 ulcer-producing irritants get under your skin as the lovable spring gobbler season progresses?

Alarm Clocks: Of all the nerve-jangling inventions ever perfected, the alarm clock must rank number one. When you are forced to depend on these monsters for 40 to 50

springtime mornings to rouse you out of greatly needed sleep, you daily feel like throwing those darned things in the deepest lake around! At 3 a.m. the contrivance erupts and jerks you out of the arms of Morpheus into a mad dash to get breakfast, drive recklessly, meet hunting companions and try to arrive in the gobbler woods before the old boys awaken. It seems that damnable clock always goes off much too soon. Other nights you can't even get to sleep for worrying about whether or not that contraption will fail to go off and you might miss a hunting opportunity.

Telephones: Our friendly telephone is another mechanical device which is most essential in arranging busy turkey hunting schedules and in receiving turkey news from all precincts. However, they are constant sources of displeasure to the followers of the tom turkey mania. Naturally, when you are worn out from constant bouts with king gobblers you must hit the sack early. But what usually happens? That contemptible gadget wakes you out of a deep slumber and even though your poor body is exhausted, you frequently can't get to sleep. In my home, people keep calling up until midnight and by that time I am raging mad. We have an unsatisfactory yet necessary arrangement in our den; the telephone and the alarm clock are situated on a table beside my bed, so my worn-out, sleep-starved brain has a tough time distinguishing between the two nerve-shattering contraptions.

Quicky Breakfasts: I dearly love a blue-plate leisurely breakfast featuring country ham, eggs, fried potatoes, grits, biscuits and coffee. However, during gobbler season, what is my boring menu? Everything is instant—juice, oatmeal, sweet roll and coffee all consumed in four minutes flat! Hurry-up breakfasts are another example of the sacrifices which we poor turkey enthusiasts must make to enjoy our sport!

Insects: Outdoor writers who strive to describe spring gobbler hunting invariably rave about the emergence of a delightful season featuring birds, buds and blooms. It is unfortunate that other creatures appear at the exact same time to make our lives miserable. Springtime insects are everywhere and most persistent. We worshipers of the tom turkey cult are constantly besieged by the onslaught of gnats, mosquitos, chiggers, ticks, fleas, ants and bees. Despite utilizing insect sprays and netting, our bodies soon become a mass of red, irritating welts that beg to be scratched. Gobbler hunters' hides soon resemble those of junkyard dogs who suffer from advanced cases of the mange.

Vehicles: Some type of wheels are an absolute necessity to pursue the wily wild gobblers. Somehow, we take them for granted and assume that they will always be reliable. Nothing can be more exasperating than a dead battery, a flat tire or an empty gas tank at 3:30 a.m. when we are fixing to start out on our gobbler crusades.

Self Hunting Dogs: One of my personal pet hates is self-hunting dogs and their owners who selfishly permit their canines to range at large during the springtime without regard for nesting wildlife or hunters who might be trying to work a gobbler. Every spring season we can count on having a number of gobbler sessions interrupted or terminated by a single cur or a pack of self-hunting dogs running a deer, fox or rabbits. Normally, those hateful, loud-mouthed hounds appear on the scene just about the time that gobbler is approaching within gun range, after you have worked hard to locate and call him to you.

Power Saws: Another source of irritation that occurs much to frequently are those power saws which erupt unexpectedly and abort an otherwise delightful morning's recreation. Obviously, that pulpwood or saw-timber operator cannot be blamed. He is usually a hard-working individual attempting to make a living and unaware of the fact that you are in that same woods working a gobbler. However, his noisy power

saw is devastating. Whenever timber cutting operations commence, our only alternative is to depart immediately for a quieter territory.

Crows: There appears to be an over-population of these big-mouthed obnoxious birds everywhere we hunt. In some states, imitating a barred or great horned owl call will turn on every silent gobbler. Most of the times we try this technique, every crow in a three county radius converges and the sky becomes black with those pesky rascals. With all their raucous quarreling, either calling or listening for turkeys is downright ridiculous!

Mountains: The Blue Ridge Mountains, one of my favorite gobbler hunting areas, are magnificent, but extremely deceptive. From a distance they appear to be a piece of cake to climb, but when you start hunting them, they prove to be downright steep and surprisingly high. Those darn tom turkeys could cooperate by either setting up their territories on the lower ridges or by flying down to us when we give them our alluring calls, but they stubbornly remain in their mountain sanctuaries. If we want action, we must climb up to their domains. It is most unfortunate that turkey hunters get older and less athletic each year, whereas those detestable mountains appear to get steeper.

Weather: There are some perfectly joyous days featuring sunshine, blue skies and warm temperatures which occur during the spring tom seasons. However, it is an unfortunate fact that there are numerous mornings when we should have remained in bed, but we never do. I detest mornings dominated by rain, sleet, snow, wind, thunder and lightening or combinations of all of them. During some spring seasons, temperatures often will flucuate between the low 20s and the upper 90s. How in the world can poor gobbler hunters wear enough diverse clothing to keep from freezing, roasting or drowning on any given day?

Gobblers: Not all male turkeys are magnificent and cooperative; many are downright contrary and exasperating. There are three types of turkey toms which I particularly dislike: 1. The strong silent ones who refuse to sound off and won't even answer your best calls. 2. "Reluctant lovers" who will gobble constantly but refuse to move a foot toward your direction. 3. The "chicken" gobblers who will respond to your yelping, but will run like rabbits in the opposite direction.

Hens: Why can't those oversexed hens concentrate on nesting and incubation duties rather than taking away our gobblers? There is no way that we gobbler enthusiasts can compete with those sweet-talking hens.

Snakes: After some negative experiences with Eastern diamond rattlesnakes and cottonmouths in the Deep South, I must admit that I don't particularly like the idea of tramping around our mountains where timber rattlers and copperheads abound. Even though I have observed only one copperhead during many springtimes, it is a frightening experience to go stumbling through thick vegetation and rocky outcroppings while it is pitch dark. I'll forever remember the admonition I was given by a turkey guide one delightful morning in coastal South Carolina. We were forcing our way through extemely thick palmettos long before daybreak. The guide warned me to watch carefully where I stepped because he had killed a number of enormous rattlesnakes in that area earlier in the week.

Turkey Callers: Two types of yelpers that at times irritate me are: a) diaphragms that on occasions get lodged in my throat and make me gag when the gobblers are approaching, and b) box callers which squeak and squawk whenever they get damp or wet.

Colds: Springtime maladies keep us sneezing and wheezing throughout the gobbler season and helps add another distressing dimension to this pleasurable sport.

Crippled Gobblers: My day is always ruined when someone shoots at and cripples a large tom turkey. We spend the remainder of the day searching hopelessly for the lost trophy.

Dressing Gobblers: The culmination of a so-called successful turkey

hunt is always the distasteful task of dressing our trophies. In a relatively short time we reduce our magnificent toms to stark naked carcasses. The nasty breast sponge, blood, viscera, feathers, blow flies and odors are not my favorite part of the spring gobbling routine.

Hunting Accidents: I really become incensed when I read about or observe the results of some stupid turkey hunting accident resulting in injuries or fatalities! When will some hunters learn to recognize the difference between 200-pound hunters and 20-pound gobblers? Why do hunters, imitating the call of a turkey hen, get shot during the gobbler season?

Slavery: I thoroughly dislike having been hooked on and being a slave to spring gobblers. I hate myself every morning for leaving a warm bed and loving wife at an ungodly hour to go chasing up and down mountains running after those stupid-looking big birds. I am ashamed of myself for neglecting family, friends, work and community responsibilities in favor of those contemptible tom turkeys. I abhor the fact that I have become a helpless, addicted gobbler hunter!

Last Day Blues: We detest the last day of the gobbler season when we are thoroughly exhausted physically and mentally and the gobbler mania is finally finished. Praise the Lord! But, secretly we are most unhappy and grieving that we have another unbearably long 11 months to wait for that whole ridiculous routine to start all over again. Spring gobbler hunters are truly a strange breed! □

C.H. "Kit" Shaffer is a retired Game Department biologist and an expert on turkeys and turkey hunting. He lives in Lynchburg.

White-breasted nuthatch; illustration by George Cramer

Birding Indian-style

Birding by canoe lets you peek into the bird world—largely unnoticed.

by Curtis Badger

photo by Rob Simpson

Yellow-rumped warbler

On Sunday we had lunch with the warblers, a rather large congregation of yellow-rumps that were passing some time in a myrtle thicket near our home while they were migrating through Virginia. Yellow-rumped warblers are very fond of the purple berries of bay myrtle bushes, which is why the birds also are known as myrtle warblers. On Sunday, they were packing away those purple berries as though they had heard that myrtle bushes were headed for immediate extinction.

My wife and I were packing away ham sandwiches and drinking Cokes, and Tom, who is five, was eating a peanut butter sandwich and drinking apple juice. We were in the canoe, which we had pulled into the marsh beneath the myrtle thicket. From where we sat, the warblers were only a few feet away, flitting around the undergrowth and eating berries. That we had parked our canoe in their favorite lunchtime thicket bothered them not at all, as long as we stuck to the ham and peanut butter and left the purple berries to them.

That's the nice thing about a canoe. It can take you to places too soggy to explore on foot, yet totally inaccessible by larger boats. Birds seem tolerant of canoes, even when they contain three humans, the smallest of whom is wearing a fluorescent yellow Snoopy flotation vest and is slapping at the water with a miniature paddle.

Birds seem to think that canoes are some sort of bulky but benign marsh critters that have every right to be there among the cordgrass and myrtles. And so, canoes are the perfect vehicles for bird watching. As long as you're relatively quiet and remain seated in the boat, you can get surprisingly close to wild birds and explore habitat that normally would be inaccessible.

The myrtle thicket where we shared lunch with the warblers borders a farm field where I often hunt quail, or when the season is out, go hiking. I walked the farm the week after our canoe outing, and the yellow-rumps were still in the myrtle bushes, but they would let me approach only to within about 30 feet of them before flitting off to the next thicket. Even when they stayed put, they were on constant alert, keeping an eye on me rather than fueling up with myrtle berries. Hence, another advantage of the canoe: the birds you see are usually going about standard bird business, not eyeing you with a mix of fear and curiosity.

The late Dr. Heathcote Kimball, a dental surgeon who retired to Virginia's Eastern Shore, was a noted birder and wildlife photographer who did most of his work from boats, or while wading in water. His theory was that birds were frightened by human beings on foot; if he was in a boat or walking in waist-deep water, his legs would not be visible, and the birds would not go on the alert. Judging from his photographs, his theory was correct.

Dr. Kimball used a small skiff to photograph water birds, and he often wore long-sleeved shirts and dark gloves to avoid frightening birds while he adjusted the controls on his camera. Birds associate the movement of white arms and hands with dangerous humans, he told me. If you wear a dark shirt, gloves, and move slowly, the birds will accept you and gradually return to their routine.

Canoes and small skiffs are obviously the best choices for watching and photographing waterfowl and shorebirds, but you can also see a surprisingly large number of upland birds from a small boat, especially if you paddle toward the head of a stream that winds through woodland and farm fields.

The creeks we normally explore are bordered by a narrow marsh, then thickets of myrtle, greenbriar, cedar, sweet gum, and oak, which make up the fringe of a farm field.

Birding by canoe adds another dimension to a family outing, particularly for youngsters; photo by David Liebman.

Most of the upland birds using that particular field are found in this edge habitat, the narrow fringe of hardwoods that separate the field from the marsh. Here in this narrow thicket they have protection from predators, plentiful and varied sources of food, and adequate places to nest and rest. So in habitat like this, your best approach for a close look at upland birds might actually be by water rather than by land.

We normally put in along the wider portions of a stream and then paddle toward the headwaters. If it's a tidal creek, we time the trip to take advantage of the rising tide as we paddle up the creek, and then we return on the falling tide. Our standard procedure is to put in perhaps two hours before high tide, then float upstream while the tide is rising, eat lunch at slack tide, then return as the tide ebbs. We're not inherently lazy, but paddling against a strong current is not our favorite hobby.

By beginning a birding-by-boat trip on a wider piece of water and then paddling toward the headwaters, you can pack a lot of variety into a relatively short trip. On a creek we frequently explore, we begin at a wide, shallow area that is typical tidal, saltwater habitat. Depending upon the season, we will see laughing gulls, herring gulls, and, in winter, ring-necked ducks. We can count on least, common, and Forester's terns. We'll see cormorants, ospreys, yellowlegs, whimbrels, skimmers, willets, glossy ibises, clapper rails, boat-tailed grackles, and perhaps an oyster-catcher.

Fall through early summer are our favorite times to go because the weather is invigorating and the waterfowl are in. We can depend on seeing hooded and red-breasted mergansers, buffleheads, scaup, and occasionally other diving ducks on the open stretches of the creek, then as we paddle upstream we'll find black ducks, green-winged teal, blue-winged teal, mallards, wood ducks, and the occasional pintail. Great blue herons are common, and now and then we'll see tri-coloreds and little blues.

As the creek narrows and becomes brackish, the habitat changes quickly. Salt marsh cordgrass *(Spartina alterniflora)* gives way to black needlerush, fleabane, and sedges, and we see red-winged blackbirds, black-crowned night herons, belted kingfishers, and perhaps a king rail. Northern harriers will patrol the marsh and adjacent fields, and we'll usually see a red-tailed hawk or two soaring overhead.

The real nitty gritty of boat birding comes when the creek narrows down to a trickle, and you have marsh grass brushing the boat on both sides. When the stream winds around a woods or field edge, you're likely to see most anything. Within the space of a few dozen feet, you might jump a pair of black ducks, disturb a sleeping great horned owl, launch a great blue heron, put up a covey of quail, watch a harrier catch a field mouse, see a kingfisher hover and dive, spot in the underbrush brown thrashers, robins, mockingbirds, a variety of sparrows, marsh wrens, and thrushes, and then, perhaps, have lunch with a group of yellow-rumped warblers.

Birding by boat is a modest sport, requiring only the most fundamental of craft. You don't need a canoe made of expensive, space-age plastics, and you don't need anything with a racing hull. Our birding boat is a heavy, fiberglass Old Town, one of the first molded fiberglass canoes the company made. We bought it through a newspaper classified ad about 10 years ago, and since then it has sat patiently in our backyard, waiting for those occasional Sunday trips when we load it into the truck for the ride down to the creek.

illustration by George Cramer

photo by David Liebman

photo by Bill Lea

With a canoe, you can observe birds like the tri-colored heron (above) or the red-tailed hawk (illustration opposite) up close.

Marsh wren; photo by Maslowski

Great horned owl; photo by Rob Simpson

Yellow-crowned night heron; photo by Curtis Badger

This old canoe has long since been replaced in Old Town's line by sleeker, lighter, more modern craft, but she's all we need for the occasional birding trips. The boat is efficient, undemanding, and tough as a hockey puck. We hose her off after each use, and every couple of years we'll give her a coat of wax.

I suppose a small skiff or a johnboat would suffice for birding trips, but flat-bottomed boats need to be poled rather than paddled, and a human standing in a boat would be just as intimidating to a bird, I would think, as a human approaching from a soybean field. Besides, canoes are faster, more maneuverable, easier to propel, and better able to negotiate tight passages through the marsh. The American Indians used them for many generations for hunting and trapping in the marshes, so the design is indeed a time-tested combination of form and function.

Other than a proper boat, the only other necessities for a productive boat birding trip are binoculars, a field guide, personal flotation devices and whatever you might want to share at the covered-dish dinner with the warblers. I might add that a topographic map is an almost indispensable tool, especially if you're canoeing

Great egret; photo by Dwight Dyke

Birds you might meet while canoeing—

Belted kingfisher; photo by Vinyard Brothers

Double-crested cormorant; photo by Rob Simpson

unfamiliar waters. We use topos to plan our trips because they make it easy to pick out areas where we can explore a wide variety of habitats—and therefore see a wide variety of birds—in a relatively short trip. We look for convenient put-in locations along a fairly wide body of water which quickly narrows down to a modest stream. We look for streams that wind through farm fields and woodlands rather than more populated areas. If a convenient put-in happens to be on private property, it's usually easy to get the necessary permission to launch.

Topographic maps are available by mail from the Virginia Division of Mineral Resources, P.O. Box 3667, Charlottesville, Virginia 22903, 804/293-5121. Maps are available in a variety of scales, but the best for planning canoe trips are the 1:24,000 series because they show more detail than maps which cover a wider area. The maps sell for $2.50 each, plus sales tax and postage. A directory of 1:24,000-scale maps is available at no charge from the above address. □

Curtis Badger is director of publications for the Wildlife Art Museum of the Ward Foundation in Maryland and is a frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife.

Journal

Extra Magazines Available

Our February 91 "Mountain Kin" special photo issue must have been a keeper! We're still glowing from all the many wonderful comments on it and requests for extra copies we've received.

Just to let you know, we do have lots of extra copies of that magazine available. Just send $1 for each copy requested (checks made payable to the *Treasurer of Virginia)* to: *Virginia Wildlife*, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. □

Fish Citation Program Changes

Beginning in May, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' fish citation program will incorporate these changes:

All anglers will be awarded a paper certificate for each citation application sent in. This certificate will have silver-embossed freshwater fish art in a blue border with the angler's name, fish species, weight of fish, and date of catch printed in black.

The citation plaque, which was fomerly the first award to be given to an angler, has been upgraded to recognize anglers distinguishing themselves by catching five of the same species of fish.

Anglers who have achieved expert status in any species will be listed in the newly-created Angler Hall of Fame section published annually in *Virginia Wildlife.*

The cloth Expert and Master Angler patches will continue to be awarded under the same rules, but the bar award, which was formerly attached to the plaque award, will be eliminated.

Anglers will continue to use the yellow citation cards to submit entries. Please call the Resource Education Section at 804/367-1000 with any questions regarding these changes. □

Family Fishing Clinics Scheduled

Join the fun! Eight free family fishing clinics will be held again this year throughout the state on Saturday, June 1 from 8 a.m. to 12 noon. Started by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries three years ago to introduce fishing to families, these clinics have become a big success, with kids and their families enjoying a day of simple instruction, good food and a good time. With the major sponsorship of the Virginia BASS Federation and McDonalds restaurants, the local sponsorship of parks and recreation departments, the Izaak Walton League, bait contributions of Fish Tales, Inc. of Chilhowie, and invaluable volunteers, these clinics targeted at families with 6 to 12-year-old children have expanded to include eight locations throughout the state. Make plans to attend the clinic in your area—the only requirement is that adults must accompany their children. Registration is limited to 100 children per clinic.

Registration information:

Alexandria Clinic—Lake Cook, Cameron Regional Park, contact Janet Barnett, 703/838-4343

Staunton Clinic—Lake Tams, Gypsy Hill Park, contact Paul Bugas, 703/332-9120

Lynchburg Clinic—Thrasher Lake, contact Sara Lu Hart, 804/929-9371

Richmond Clinic—Dorey Park, contact Dee Donally, 804/672-5147

Bristol Clinic—Clear Creek Reservoir, contact Don Quesenberry, 703/628-4781

Virginia Beach Clinic—Lake Trashmore, contact Judy Wilder, 804/471-5884

Roanoke Clinic—Veterans Administration Medical Center Lake, Salem, contact Scott Smith, 703/857-7704

Petersburg Clinic—Wilcox Lake, contact Chuck Rousseau or Wayne Gee, 804/733-2394 □

Free Fishing Days!

Get your fishing gear ready! On Saturday June 1 and Sunday June 2 you can fish anywhere in the state except trout-designated waters without a license! The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is supporting these complimentary free fishing days as a way to encourage Virginians to try fishing—with no strings attached. But, beware! We're hoping in those two days to hook you on the sport.

Although you won't have to purchase a fishing license, you will have to follow all other fishing regulations on these two days, including creel limits, so be sure to pick up a copy of the latest fishing digest from your local sporting goods store. □

Banquet to Aid Turkeys

The newly formed Greater Richmond Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation will hold a fund raising banquet and auction on May 8th at the Sandston Moose Lodge in Richmond.

If you're interested in preserving our finest game bird, the wild turkey, and are looking for outdoor art and equipment this auction could be your ticket to a profitable evening.

The banquet is open to everyone who wants to help our wild turkeys. For more information, contact Elbert Holt, Box 246, Midlothian, VA 23113, or call 804/272-2118. □

Letters

Still vs. Stand Hunting

Now that the hunting season is over I'd like to comment on deer hunting. I've heard and read all I

want to hear about these still or stand hunters who hate hunting with dogs.

I hunt with dogs, (some of my own), I use a CB radio and I drive a two-wheel drive truck. I don't tear up roads, I don't drive all over fields where crops are to be planted. Any other things my neighbors ask of me, I do.

What gets to me is this. These still hunters (especially the ones who don't have very good luck) come in where I hunt and sit on the trails of deer and wait for my dogs to run them one. Then they kill it and gut it right there. That's the end of my dogs and hunting for the day, maybe longer.

It's not *all* still hunters, just the few that could care less about my way of hunting. It's just like a few dog hunters hurt my way of hunting. I say don't condemn my way of hunting because of a few hunters. Let the game wardens and law officials handle them. We can hunt together, still hunters and doggers, too.

Ronald H. Collins, Jr.
Brookneal

Let's Hear It for Southeast VA

As a wife and mother of two sons (now grown and married) I subscribed to *Virginia Wildlife* many years ago. Over the years I became an avid reader of the magazine, perhaps more so than my husband and sons—because I've always loved nature and the outdoors.

Recently I have read with interest the letters of praise and criticism from your readers, and find myself, at times, agreeing with both sides.

There are times when I feel that too much attention is focused on the Blue Ridge Mountains and Shenandoah Valley area, although I love that part of Virginia.

As a lifelong resident of Nansemond County and Suffolk, Virginia I would really like to see some articles about our area in the magazine.

With six beautiful lakes within the city limits and the Great Dismal Swamp plus lots of farmland and wooded areas, we have many opportunities to fish, hunt and enjoy wildlife and nature.

Six years ago my husband and I retired, sold our home of 40 years and moved into a small cabin we owned in a secluded area on Lake Cohoon.

We have the privilege of observing wildlife 24 hours a day—squirrels, rabbits, fox, raccoons, possums, groundhogs and otters. Birds and ducks we feed daily. Snow and Canada geese stop over on their way south or north.

Each day I thank God for the privilege of living here, where we can commune with nature, watch the changing seasons, sunrise and sunset, the full moon glistening on the lake like a pot of gold. We now have time to stop, look, listen and enjoy what God has given us.

Marjorie Davidson
Suffolk

March Editorial

I have been reading the ongoing pro-hunting articles and letters with interest and agree that hunting is a needed conservation practice which is enjoyed by many people. However, I was surprised to read on the March Editor's page that the editor "stammers" when someone says they prefer to watch wildlife and not kill anything. The man who was quoted did not say that he was anti-hunting, yet it was assumed so. Not everyone who is pro-hunting wants to hunt.

My husband likes to hunt, and I can appreciate his and other hunter's enjoyment of the sport. I have no problem helping him cook and eat wild game. I do not particularly care for deer hunting with dogs because of the problems caused on roadways and with neighbors, but that is a different subject. I still support hunting if done by the rules. I prefer to observe wildlife without a gun, and I do not feel a need to apologize for it or be defensive any more than someone who loves to hunt should.

I think that *Virginia Wildlife's* pro-hunting message has been made clear. I hope that future issues will move on to other important topics. I like the diversity of articles in the magazine.

Lee Ann Dail
Charlotte Courthouse

My March issue of *Virginia Wildlife* arrived today. As usual I enjoyed it.

In reading your editorial, I feel you may be misjudging the non-hunter you talked with.

I too, could have given the same answer he did and yet I have a lifetime hunting, fishing and trapping license here in Vermont.

As a boy I hunted then lost interest in it until my son was at the age he wanted to hunt so I went with him, until he was "on his own." The last time I hunted was with a bow and arrow. I jumped my deer but didn't even raise my bow.

Now I no longer like to hunt *but* am not anti-hunting. I do not post my land here. I have also helped a hunter drag his deer across the pasture and get him to the weigh station with it. Each year the hunter gets permission before parking his vehicle in our parking area.

I don't hunt as I'd rather see the animals alive, yet I'm not anti-hunting as I know how much it means to some people. I also know that the population needs to be kept under control.

Donald M. Wheatley
Glover, Vermont

That Dirty Rat . . .Snake

I received your magazine (February 91) today and thought it was excellent. I thoroughly enjoyed it and all your issues. I noticed the picture of a snake on page 20 that you identified as a black racer. I might be wrong but it looks more like a black rat snake. Anyway, I enjoy the magazine. Keep them coming!

James Blodgett

You found us out! If you flip back to page 10 in the April 90 issue of Virginia Wildlife, *you'll see our February 91 model portrayed as the snake he is, the black rat snake, along with the differences between his regal self and the black racer. Oh, that our staff had memories longer than yesterday and had polished their identification skills as well as* Virginia Wildlife *readers! We count on you all to keep us straight!*

Habitat

Fire Pink

by Nancy Hugo

Some wildflowers are "keep going" flowers. Much as you'd like to stop when you see them along the road, you have miles to go and you figure you'll see them again. Not so the fire pink.

The fire pink is a "turnaround flower." Not only will your head turn like an owl's when you spot a fire pink along the roadside, you'll turn the car around to go back for a closer look.

Silene virginica is the botanical name of this striking native wildflower that blooms not only along roadsides but in dry woods and on rocky slopes in about three quarters of Virginia's counties. It's in the piedmont and mountains that you're most likely to find fire pinks. It's not unusual to spot a single blossom electrifying a roadside, but in some places fire pinks occur in patches of as many as 12 to 15 plants.

Fire pink (Silene virginica); *photo by Spike Knuth.*

The first thing that will strike you about fire pinks is their color. They are a brilliant, knock-your-eyes-out red. Red flowers are rare in nature, but red flowers that bloom in the spring and early summer are particularly unusual, so the red of the fire pink is as startling as it is arresting.

So why are these red flowers called fire pinks? The "pink" in the fire pink's name refers to the plant's membership in the Pink or Carnation family. All members of the Pink family, whatever their color, share characteristics like swollen nodes on the stems, flowers with five often notched or fringed petals, and leaves that occur opposite each other on the stem. The fire pink just happens to be a red Pink.

The fire pink plant itself is a spindly thing. The flowers bloom on 1-2′ stems that rise from a basal rosette with lance to spatula-shaped leaves. The flowers are borne in loose clusters on these slender stems which branch near the top. The flowers themselves each have five widely-spaced narrow petals that meet in a tiny circular frill at the flower's center. Each petal is notched at the tip.

All *Silenes*, the genus to which fire pinks belong, are referred to as Catchflies because they exude a sticky substance from their stems and flowers which is reported to trap crawling insects. (The name *Silene* is from the Greek *sialon* for saliva, an allusion to these sticky secretions). You can feel this sticky substance on the long tubular calyx of fire pink flowers. The shape and color of fire pink flowers also suggests the flowers would attract hummingbirds, and although I'm not sure this is true of fire pinks, I know *Silene regia*, a rare red Silene that occurs west of us, is pollinated by hummingbirds.

Wildflower lovers who want a longer glimpse of fire pinks than a roadside encounter or woodland pass can provide might want to try growing fire pinks in the garden. They are short-lived perennials but can be kept going in the garden by dividing a few clumps every year. They bloom early in my garden—sometimes as early as the third week of April. And I love to see them blooming with the white flowers of the rue anemone. One source of fire pinks is Native Gardens, Route 1, Box 494, Greenback, TN 37742 (615) 856-3350. Virginia Natives, Wildside Farm, P.O. Box 18, Hume, Virginia 22639 also offers these plants.

Whatever you do, don't dig up fire pinks in the wild. What looks like a no-man's-land along the roadside to you may be the very spot where motorists like me thrill to see fire pinks blooming every spring. □

Family Outdoors

Leave 'Em Alone!

by Carl "Spike" Knuth

It's a familiar scene each spring at state fish and game agencies. A game warden is on his way to a wildlife rehabilitator with a little big-eyed fawn that someone has "found" in the wild, "abandoned" by its mother, and now it must be taken care of and raised to adulthood—if it lives—in a pen. Never again will it be able to live in the wild, because it will have become too accustomed to man.

Each spring and early summer, state and federal game wardens, biologists and wildlife managers begin receiving calls from people who have picked up "lost" or "orphaned" young wildlife. As people get back to the outdoors in April, May and June, they may come upon a spotted fawn or baby raccoon. Baby animals are cute, furry, and soft and we all are drawn to them as if by instinct. We want to care for the little critters. After all, certainly its mother wouldn't leave her babies alone, would she? It's up to us to save the little things. Or is it?

It's been estimated that 99 percent of all baby animals picked up by well-meaning people are definitely not orphans. This is especially true of fawns. The mating season for white-tailed deer begins in late fall and the does have their fawns in spring, usually in May. Soon after the birth of their fawns, does will stay with their fawns only to feed them or keep them warm.

Rarely does a doe aggressively protect her young, and she really doesn't have to. A fawn has almost no odor and is difficult to detect by predators. Additionally, the fawn's dappled coat and general color is excellent camouflage so it is safe from most predators except a well-intentioned human who thinks he or she has found an abandoned baby.

In reality, the mother is out feeding, away from her baby, but she knows exactly where it is. Sometimes she's simply waiting for the two-legged intruder to leave. Wildlife have a great fear of man and will hide or retreat to safety.

Deer aren't the only victims of our misguided actions. People will find and remove baby raccoons, rabbits, birds and even skunks, thinking they've been abandoned. It's probably true that some people purposefully take the little critter, thinking it will make a great pet. This is a big mistake. Wildlife simply do not cope as well in captivity as they do in their natural surroundings.

Very young wild animals seldom survive when under average human care. Too often, young wild animals die of improper diet or unsanitary conditions. Their digestive systems do not respond well to human food, cow's milk or pet foods, all of which have been altered or "manufactured" to some extent, with chemicals added. The milk of a doe is far more nutritive than cow's milk. Young animals actually begin to die of malnutrition from eating some of man's "foodless" foods.

Wild pets are still wild with all their natural wild instincts, and are very unpredictable. As they get older, their dispositions change. Little "Bambi" can grow into a young, sexually mature buck—an unpredictably dangerous animal when he goes into rut. There have been numerous incidents where they have gored or trampled their handlers, even killing them! That cute, furry raccoon can become a snarling, biting, wild animal overnight for no apparent reason. Many people have had their hands severly bitten or children have had their faces chewed.

Raccoons, foxes and skunks may carry distemper or even rabies. There is no licensed rabies vaccine that exists at present for wildlife. While dogs and cats can be protected, wild animals are not necessarily immunized.

Ultimately, game wardens or wildlife managers have their regular duties, interrupted, often driving hundreds of miles to pick up little creatures that have now become a burden to the one who was "saving" them. Lack of proper nourishment, a jolting ride in a stuffy car or truck, and being handled too much stresses the animal and it begins to take a toll.

Finally, it is a violation of law to take an animal from the wild into captivity in Virginia. This is protection for man and animal alike. If you should come across a baby animal, remember where your saw it and just leave it be. If your conscience really bothers you and you are convinced it may be sick or abandoned, check back a day or two later. If it is still there and appears to be in a weakened condition, report it to a state game official, biologist or warden. They'll know how to handle the animal. Many states have licensed wildlife rehabilitators who have the expertise to raise wild animals or nurse them back to health. Often, through a minimum of contact, young animals can be released immediately into the wild with the ability to cope.

Wildlife belongs in the wild. Taking a young animal out of the wild and caging it is cruel. Respect and appreciate the requirements of wild animals. Their chances are better in the wild than with man. Enjoy seeing wildlife babies and feel privileged to have witnessed such a thing, but leave 'em alone.! □

Photo Tips

Close-Up Encounters With a Toad

by Lynda Richardson

In my garden lives a large American toad, and each year we greet one another during the annual spring weed pulling. When he (or she) hops into view, I ceremoniously toss him a fat, juicy worm. Although a common backyard creature, I've found my little buddy to be one of the most cooperative and entertaining subjects for close-up photography.

When you first meet a toad, remember the little fellow might be afraid of you. As you pick him up, he might fearfully decide to "vent his bladder." This watery defense mechanism is an attempt to discourage potential predators from making him a meal. Another defense is the toxic glands in his skin. When handling a toad, be careful not to rub your eyes, nose or mouth, because these "bufo toxins" can inflame your mucus membranes. By simply washing with soap and water, you can avoid any irritation from handling your knobby brown subject.

Once a toad realizes that you aren't a threat, he can easily be handled. I can set my friend in front of me and he usually stays still long enough for several pictures. If he decides to move, I simply grab and return him to the "proper" spot. Sometimes, I can get him to raise his head by touching under his chin and lightly pushing up.

Because the toad is such a cooperative model, you can experiment with compositions, lighting, backgrounds and color. Try sitting one on a rock, amongst fallen leaves or in the grass.

Experiment by using color to add interest to the shot. For instance, emphasize the metallic gold in his eyes by including a yellow flower in your shot. Or let him blend into the brown of old mulch where those gold eyes are the only color in the photograph.

American toad (Bufo americanus): *photo by Lynda Richardson.*

When photographing subjects like toads, I use a 100mm macro lens, which allows me to be farther away from my subject than a 55mm macro, giving both of us a bit of breathing room. Other options include using regular telephoto lenses with extension tubes or "close-up filters."

I feel that photographing a subject on its level gives my pictures the most impact. When photographing toads, I lay on my stomach and either rest my camera on the ground, prop up my arms for tripod-like support or use a small stable tripod that can go to ground level. Then, I look through my camera and decide how much of Mr. Toad I want in the picture. Do I want his whole body or the patterns on his skin? Once I arrive at a desired magnification, I simply move the camera forward and backward to focus. I'm careful not to focus by turning the lens barrel as this will change my magnification and exposure.

Exposure can be a tricky thing in macro photography. Every time you change a magnification by extending your macro lens, adding extension tubes, or using a bellows, you lessen the amount of light reaching the film. You must always keep this in mind and change your F-stops and/or shutter speeds to compensate. When conditions allow, I shoot in half stop increments up to a full stop above and below my chosen exposure.

Also, keep in mind that the higher the magnification, the less depth of field available at any F-stop. So, if you want all of your toad in focus, use the greatest depth of field possible and/or low magnification. The higher the F-stop, F11, F16, etc., the more that's in focus. If you only want your toad's eye in focus, shoot with a lower F-stop and/or a higher magnification.

As you make pictures of the friendly toad, remember that your model is a living creature. Treat him accordingly. A hot sun can cook your subject, so don't keep him in it too long. Also keep in mind that your subject has to have time for his own business. Photograph him for an hour or so and then turn him loose at the same spot you found him.

Throughout all our photo sessions, my garden pal posed as well as any accomplished model. The challenge of photographing your backyard toad can provide an entertaining addition to your "up close and personal" wildlife experiences. □

Recipes

A Spring Wild Turkey Dinner

by Joan Cone

Having a wild turkey in the oven is an achievement which is uniquely American. The successful hunter should clean the bird immediately after shooting. Upon returning home, pluck the bird, wash out cavity well and remove oil sacs at the base of the back near the tail.

Like other wild birds and waterfowl, I find it best not to stuff wild turkeys but rather make and serve the stuffing separately.

The following is a roasting timetable for an unstuffed wild turkey.

4 to 8 pounds	1¾ to 2¼ hours
8 to 12 pounds	2 to 2½ hours
12 to 15 pounds	2½ to 3 hours
15 to 20 pounds	3 to 3½ hours

Menu:
Roast Unstuffed Wild Turkey
Apricot Stuffing
Broccoli-Cheese Casserole
Cranberry-Sour Cream Salad
Carrie's Chocolate Tea Cake

Roast Unstuffed Wild Turkey

1 tablespoon flour
1 onion, sliced
3 stalks celery with leaves, chopped
1 wild turkey, dressed
Salt and pepper
1 large apple, quartered
Melted butter or margarine
2 tablespoons cornstarch
2 tablespoons cold water
Browning sauce

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Add 1 tablespoon flour to a turkey-size (19 x 23½-inch) Oven Cooking Bag and shake. Place bag in a 13 x 9 x 2-inch deep roasting pan. Add onion and celery to bag. Season cavity of bird with salt and pepper and add apple quarters. Truss the turkey. Brush entire bird with melted butter and season with salt and pepper. Place turkey in bag on top of onion and celery. Close bag with nylon tie. Insert meat thermometer into thigh through top of bag. Make six ½-inch slits in top of bag. Roast according to chart or until internal temperature is 185 degrees. Remove turkey from bag and keep warm. Pour drippings into a saucepan. Blend cornstarch into water and blend into drippings in saucepan. Cook over medium heat until thickened. If a darker gravy is desired, add a few drops of browning sauce.

Apricot Stuffing

8 to 10 slices whole wheat or white bread
1/2 cup cut-up dried apricots
1/2 cup chopped pecans or walnuts
1 teaspoon dried crushed sage leaves
1 teaspoon dried parsley flakes
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 medium onion, chopped
1 cup chopped celery
1/4 cup butter or margarine
1 egg, beaten
1 cup chicken broth

Heat oven to 325 degrees. Place bread directly on oven rack. Bake until bread is dry, 5 to 10 minutes; cool. Cut into ½-inch cubes. Place bread cubes in medium mixing bowl. Add apricots, pecans, sage, parsley, salt and pepper. Mix well; set aside. In medium skillet, cook and stir onion and celery in butter over medium heat until tender. Stir into bread-cube mixture. Add beaten egg and broth; mix well. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

Broccoli-Cheese Casserole

3 eggs
1 cup cottage cheese
1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
3 tablespoons flour
1 teaspoon salt
Dash pepper
2 packages (10 ounces each) frozen chopped broccoli, thawed

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In large bowl with wire whisk or fork, beat eggs slightly; beat in both cheeses, flour, salt and pepper. Drain broccoli well, patting dry with paper towels. Stir into egg mixture. Pour into a greased 9 x 9-inch baking pan, spreading evenly into pan with spoon. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes until mixture is firm and pulls away from sides of pan. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

Cranberry-Sour Cream Salad

2 packages (3 ounces each) cherry-flavored gelatin
2 cups boiling water
1 can (16 ounces) whole berry cranberry sauce
1 pint commercial sour cream

Dissolve gelatin in boiling water; stir in cranberry sauce. Cool and then fold in sour cream. Pour into a 6-cup mold and chill until firm. Makes 10 servings.

Carrie's Chocolate Tea Cake

My cousin, Carrie Popper, is a superb cook. She served us this sumptuous dessert during a recent visit to her home in Macon, Georgia.

6 ounces semisweet chocolate bits, melted and cooled
1 stick unsalted butter, softened
2/3 cup sugar
3 eggs
*1/2 cup cake flour**
Raspberry jam

Butter and flour a 9-inch cake pan and line bottom with waxed paper. Whisk chocolate and butter together in a bowl. Add sugar and then beat in eggs one by one. Blend in flour until just mixed. Pour into prepared pan and bake in a 350 degree (preheated) oven for 20 to 25 minutes. Cake will rise slightly, then sink in center. Cool cake in pan. Invert onto a serving plate and peel off paper. Cake will be dense and moist. Chill for 1 hour and spread top with raspberry jam. □

*In place of cake flour, you can substitute 1 cup less 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour and add 1 tablespoon cornstarch.